Y2K Myths You May Have Heard

MYTH:
Nuclear missiles and other weapons that are not Y2K compliant on January 1, 2000, automatically launch.

FALSE. There is **NO** risk of accidental launch. Procedures for launching our nation's nuclear weapons involve multiple levels of code verifications and human interaction to verify an order from the President. Computers by themselves cannot launch nuclear weapons.

MYTH:
Even though the U.S. is effectively preparing for Y2K in regards to its nuclear weapons, we have no idea what other countries are doing to prepare.

FALSE. As the Defense Department works to ensure the security of U.S. nuclear and other weapons into the Year 2000, it is also reaching out to nations around the world, including Russia, to ensure that they too are taking similar measures with their weapons systems.

MYTH:
Most elevator computers and embedded systems will fail on January 1, 2000.

FALSE. Contrary to published reports, the vast majority of elevators will not be affected by the transition to the Year 2000. Most elevators do not concern themselves with the date as part of their normal operations, and maintenance systems are often usage based. And even if elevator systems were to experience Year 2000-related failures, all elevators have manual overrides that would enable them to return to operation.

MYTH:
Organizations can experience Y2K-related glitches before to January 1, 2000.

TRUE. Many businesses and government agencies have already reached, or will soon, a phase in their operations where they need to look ahead into the Year 2000. These "look-ahead" functions might include budget programming for a fiscal year that begins sometime after January 1, 1999, or simple tasks such as making hotel or flight reservations. To the extent that the systems supporting such functions are not Y2K compliant, glitches could surface prior to the new millennium.

MYTH:
The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), certain that the air traffic control system will not be ready at the turn of the century, will ground all flights in the United States at 6 p.m. on December 31, 1999, and not let any take off until 6 a.m. January 1, 2000.

FALSE. The FAA has no plans to halt air traffic on or around December 31, 1999 - January 1, 2000. The FAA is committed to the safety of air transport and, as such, is working hard not only on its own systems, but with the airline industry, to ensure a seamless transition into the new millennium. The FAA will not compromise safety. The FAA is on-schedule to have all of its systems Y2K compliant no later than June 30, 1999.

MYTH:
The year 2000 problem will cause pacemakers to malfunction.

FALSE. While computer software frequently is embedded as a component of pacemakers, this software does not use date information in the operation of the pacemaker itself. None of the implanted devices require knowledge of, nor do they use, the current date to operate safely and effectively.

(Source: President's Council on the Year 2000 Conversion)

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Y2K Report
Facts, Fictions, and What We Need to Know

Dear 40th District resident:

If you have been following the news lately, you've heard about the potential problems that may surface as we enter the year 2000. Everything from the major airlines and public utilities to ATMs and home computers have been predicted to shut down at midnight on December 31, 1999.

Fortunately, there has been good news lately from the public officials, businesses and citizens who are working to prevent disruptions related to the Year 2000 Bug. I'm hopeful we'll ring in the next millennium with very few problems to dampen our celebration. However, we should be prepared in case the so-called Y2K bug temporarily affects our access to some goods and services and the smooth running of our businesses.

It's important to remember that Y2K problems, if they happen, won't show up all at once. A recent analysis by an international technology consulting firm indicated that only 8 to 10 percent of Y2K-related technology failures will occur during the first two weeks of 2000. In fact, some problems could start cropping up anytime.

As 2000 approaches, Washington State officials aren't just sitting by. In 1995, a new state program was established to help our agencies and citizens respond to potential Y2K problems. The Year 2000 Office recently released a report to help residents assess Y2K risks and find solutions. Many useful details are also available on the office's website at www.wa.gov/2000.

In an effort to keep you informed, this brochure answers the most frequently-asked questions about the Y2K bug, and outlines what we are doing to prepare for 2000. It also lists some things you can do to prepare yourself and your family in case some small interruptions in service do occur. I hope you find it helpful.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jeff Morris

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Health Care and Y2K

The Y2K bug is more than a computer issue. It can extend to any device with an embedded chip— that is, a computer chip with the year programmed into it. Embedded chips are found in everything from microwave ovens to metal detectors. However, most of those items do not need to know the date in order to function properly, so will most likely not be affected.

Health care devices may be a different story, however. Ventilators, apnea monitors, defibrillators, fetal monitors, CAT scanners, and dialysis machines, for example, are programed using day, month, and year. Also, computers that are used in the counting, shipping, and controlling of prescription drugs are date-dependent.

Though there is mounting evidence that most medical devices will be fine, nobody knows for sure what the affect on the prescription drug supply will be. Because of the critical nature of medications and medical devices, preparation is crucial.

If you or a member of your family are among the millions of Americans dependent upon insulin for diabetes, anti-rejection drugs, synthetic thyroid medication, other life-saving prescriptions, or an electronic medical device, consult your physician or pharmacist for advise right away.

There are several websites containing more information regarding the year 2000 and its possible effect on health care. Here are a few:

www.rx2000.org

www.cassandraproject.org

www.himanet.com

Y2K: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem?
Many computers, as well as computer chips inside a multitude of everyday devices, cannot distinguish between the years 1900 and 2000. If they are not fixed, they could malfunction.

How did the problem come about?
For decades, computer programmers, in an attempt to save valuable data storage space, routinely stored the year as two digits instead of four. For example, July 4, 1973 was entered as 07-04-73.

What progress has the state made in addressing this situation so far?
Tremendous progress has been made. As of January 1999, nearly 70% of the computer systems deemed vital for state operations had been tested and made Year 2000 compliant, and by early summer all critical systems should be compliant. At the same time, testing procedures have been adopted to ensure Year 2000 compliant systems do not become "re-infected." For more information, check www.wa.gov/2000

So how is all this going to impact my life?
No one really knows for sure. Both the public and private sectors are devoting huge resources to the Year 2000 challenge, and many people may experience no problems when January 1, 2000 arrives. On the other hand, there could be problems. For example, there could be localized power outages, phone disruptions or traffic lights could temporarily malfunction and computerized cash registers could go down.

Given the uncertainties, what should I do to prepare?
Since no one really knows what could happen, people should prepare themselves and their household as they would for any emergency. A list of Tips for Preparing for Any Emergency appears on the back of this card.

Will my electricity go out?
Probably not. According to a recent report released by the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC), electric power supply systems across the country are well on their way to being Year 2000 compliant. Washington State electric utilities are increasingly optimistic that there will be no major, lengthy power disruptions. Check the utility website at www.euy2k.com

What about my natural gas service?
Natural gas suppliers in Washington State are working closely with distributors to ensure no disruptions. The Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission's website is located at www.wutc.wa.gov

What about my telephone service?
Major telephone service providers in Washington have said they expect no major disruptions of in-state service, and most long-distance providers have already stated they expect no major problems. A couple of informative sites are www.uswest.com and www.att.com/year2000

Will any of my home appliances or personal computer fail?
Most devices, such as coffee pots, clock radios, heating and cooling equipment should not be affected. Personal computer hardware and software could be impacted, and people should check with the appropriate manufacturer's website for information.

Will my bank be impacted?
According to federal and state banking officials, more than 90% of the nation's financial institutions are already Year 2000 ready. However, glitches could occur and people should maintain current records of their bank accounts, mutual funds, local property tax bills, loan statements and other personal finance materials. The Department of Financial Institutions has information at www.wa.gov.dfi

Will it be safe to fly?
The federal government reports that airplane manufacturers say problems they have identified so far would not present a safety risk to passengers. The Federal Aviation Administration reports air traffic computer systems will be completely Year 2000 compliant no later than June 30, 1999. Check out their website at www.faay2k.com

Has the Washington National Guard been mobilized for the Year 2000?
No. It will be business as usual unless circumstances change between now and the end of the year. A portion of the Guard will be undergoing routine monthly training at a number of armories across the state the weekend of January 1-2, 2000. By scheduling regular monthly training for the first weekend of the year, Guard members will be close at hand in the event they are needed to help local jurisdictions with problems.

Tips to prepare for any emergency

Flashlights and batteries: Have several flashlights and plenty of spare batteries in your home.

Radio: Keep a battery-powered radio handy for news.

Cash: Have some cash or small-denomination traveler's checks on hand in case ATM or credit card systems experience temporary difficulties.

Gasoline: Fill up gas tanks before the year's end, but don't store gas in illegal containers.

Prescriptions: Fill all prescriptions well in advance.

Drinking water: Set aside at least three days' worth of drinking water. Store the water in tightly capped jugs kept in a dark, cool place.

Food: Set aside a manual can opener and a variety of foods that don't need refrigeration — enough for at least three days. Have access to a cooking method that doesn't rely on electricity or natural gas, such as a barbecue, wood stove or camp stove. Remember to have food for pets, too.

Warmth: It will be winter when the calendar turns to the Year 2000. Be sure to set aside extra blankets, jackets, gloves, hats, and sleeping bags. People who have fire places should set aside extra wood.

Records: Have paper copies of important records such as bank statements, paychecks, employment information, school records, bills, mortgage payments, etc. Make back-up copies of computer files.

Automatic Deposits: If you are paid by automatic deposit, check with both your employer and your banks to make sure they are Y2K compliant. Also check with companies that automatically withdraw bill payments from your account.

Entertainment: Plan for activities that don't require electricity, such as reading books, playing board games.

Y2K Timeline (January 1999 – February 2000)

Jan. 1: WA unemployment security benefit year 2000 began. No problems reported.

March 10: Securities Industry Association simulates December 29, 1999 trading and finds no problems.

April 1: Canada, Japan, England, and New York state start Fiscal Year 2000.

FAA reports the nation's air traffic control system passes Y2K test.

July 1: Fiscal year 2000 begins in 46 states.

Sept. 9: "9/9/99"– a default "nonsense" date for computers.

Oct. 1: US fiscal year 2000 begins.

Feb. 29: Leap year— not recognized as a day in most software packages.

1999

2000

Feb. 4: Airlines begin booking flights for the year 2000.

March 31: Deadlines for federal agencies to meet compliance requirements.

April 12: WA state Y2K office releases first Readiness Report.

June 30: FAA compliance deadline.

Aug. 22: GPS satellite network, which controls navigation of ships and planes, rolls over.

Sept. 23: 100 days left to year 2000.

Jan. 3: First business day of the year 2000 in the U.S.